

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 225489

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TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 225489

EXDIS

FOL REPEAT TEL AVIV 6261 SENT ACTION TEL AVIV SEP 12

QTE

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6261

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.OM 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG, US

SUBJECT: ISRAELI ACTION IN GULF OF SUEZ

REF: (A) STATE 225441, (B) STATE 225448, (C) CAIRO 12269

1. I SAW RABIN AT 1600 SEPTEMBER 12 IN JERUSALEM; PRIME MINISTER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY ALLON WHO HAD REMAINED BEHIND AFTER THE WEEKLY CABINET MEETING. I HAD THE IMPRESSION THEY KNEW PRECISELY THE NATURE OF MY INSTRUCTIONS AND WERE WELL PREPARED WITH THEIR RESPONSE. (WAS DINITZ TOLD IN WASHINGTON?).

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 225489

2. I BEGAN BY REFERRING TO THE INCIDENT REPORTED IN CAIRO 12263

AND SAID THAT OUR ATTACHES HAD BEEN INFORMED EARLIER TODAY THAT THE IDF HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THIS INCIDENT. RABIN SAID HIS UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT THE TWO VESSELS HAD NEVER BEEN CLOSER THAN 300 YARDS AND NO WORDS WERE EXCHANGED BECAUSE THE AMOCO VESSEL HAD NOT CROSSED THE MEDIAN LINE. I SAID WE WERE AGAIN CONFRONTED WITH CONFLICTING REPORTS FROM THE TWO SIDES, AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PRUDENT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO RECHECK HIS INFORMATION. HE SAID HE WOULD DO SO.

3. I THEN CONVEYED YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HAVE OUR DELEGATIONS MEET TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM OF GULF OPERATIONS. BEFORE I HAD A CHANCE TO SPECIFY THE CONDITION RE 304.1 HE INTERRUPTED ME TO SAY HE WAS WILLING TO SEND A TEAM IMMEDIATELY BUT IN THE MEANTIME THERE COULD BE NO CROSSING THE MEDIAN LINE. I SAID THIS WOULD PRESENT A PROBLEM FOR AMOCO BECAUSE, CONTRARY TO HIS BELIEF CONVEYED TO ME LAST WEEK, THE PROVISIONS OF THE CLAUSE HE HAD CITED FROM THE GAZETTE DID NOT APPLY TO THIS CONCESSION AND DRILLING MUST BEGIN BY SEPTEMBER 21.

4. RABIN ASKED IF THAT IS THE CASE, WHY COULDN'T AMOCO SIMPLY REQUEST EGYPT FOR AN EXTENSION OF ONE TO THREE MONTHS TO PERMIT CAREFUL STUDY OF THE PROBLEM. ISRAEL IS AWARE OF PLANS FOR ADDITIONAL DRILLING IN THE AREA, BUT THE ONLY SITE ON WHICH ISRAEL HAS RESERVATION IS 304.1 WHICH IS 1600 METERS EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE. IF THE QUESTION MUST BE URGENTLY RESOLVED BECAUSE OF THE SEPTEMBER 21 DEADLINE, RABIN IS READY TO SEND A TEAM TO WASHINGTON WITHIN 48 HOURS. TALKS COULD BEGIN WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY AND IF A COMPROMISE SOLUTION IS POSSIBLE, IT CAN BE FOUND IN TIME FOR AMOCO TO BEGIN ITS DRILLING A WEEK FROM MONDAY - THAT IS, A DAY BEFORE THE DEADLINE.

5. RABIN SAID WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND HE COULD NOT SEND EXPERTS TO TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF DRILLING AND, AT THE SAME TIME, GIVE APPROVAL FOR THE DRILLING TO GO AHEAD. THIS WOULD NULLIFY HIS POSITION EVEN BEFORE THE TALKS BEGAN - "THE FIG LEAF WOULD BE TOO TRANSPARENT," HE SAID.

6. RABIN CONCLUDED BY REITERATING HIS HOPE THAT THIS NOT BE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 225489

A MAJOR ISSUE BETWEEN US. HE ADDED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE EGYPT WOULD DEPRIVE AMOCO OF ITS CONCESSION IF DRILLING DOESN'T START BY SEPTEMBER 21 BECAUSE IT DOES NOT WISH TO ENDANGER ITS RELATIONS WITH AMOCO NOR AMOCO'S WORK IN OTHER PARTS OF THE FIELD.

7. COMMENT: FROM REMARKS MADE DURING INFORMAL CONVERSATION FOLLOWING MY FORMAL DEMARCHE - WHICH DESPITE INTERRUPTIONS

PARALLEL CLOSELY DEPTTEL 225441 - RABIN OBVIOUSLY BELIEVES THAT
TO ACCEDE TO DRILLING EAST OF MEDIAN LINE BEFORE TALKS
CONVENE WOULD PUT HIM IN UNTENABLE SITUATION HERE. HE IS
PROBABLY RIGHT, AND I RECOMMEND EITHER (1) THAT AMOCO
REQUEST AN EXTENSION AS SUGGESTED BY RABIN TO PERMIT TALKS
TO PROCEED AT MEASURED PACE, OR (2) IF THIS NOT FEASIBLE,
THAT WE BEGIN TALKS WITHIN NEXT 48 HOURS AND, AS FIRST
ITEM OF BUSINESS, NAIL DOWN ISRAELI ACQUIESCENCE IN AMOCO'S
OPERATION AT 304.1. I AM CONVINCED - AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE -
THAT ISRAELIS ARE PREPARED TO AGREE TO THIS PROVIDED THERE IS
UNDERSTANDING THAT WE WILL NOT PRESS THEM ON FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL
PENETRATIONS BEYOND MEDIAN LINE WITHOUT DISCUSSION AND
MUTUAL AGREEMENT.
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